



The Oasis

December 2025

Cross in the Desert UMC

Where God's Love Transforms Lives, building a just and joyful community.

Join us for Worship in Advent!

November 30	1 st Sunday of Advent	Service at 10:00 am
December 7	2 nd Sunday of Advent	Service at 10:00 am
December 14	3 rd Sunday of Advent	Service at 10:00 am
December 21	4 th Sunday of Advent	Service at 10:00 am
December 21	Blue Christmas	Service at 5:30 pm
December 24	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 6:00 pm	



In This Issue.....

Pastor's Corner.....	2
Birthdays, Special Days.....	3
General News.....	3,4,5,6,8,9
Prayer Ministry.....	7
UWFaith.....	10
Conference.....	11

Pastor's Corner



Beloveds,

As we enter the swirl of the holiday season, I find myself returning again and again to the gift of quiet. December has a way of filling itself—full calendars, full to-do lists, full emotions. And yet, at the heart of this season is a gentle invitation: *slow down, listen, breathe*. Advent reminds us that God often arrives not with fireworks, but in a whisper, in a manger, in the stillness of dawn.

This year, I invite you to claim small pockets of quiet wherever you can. Light a candle in the evening and let the silence settle. Step outside for five minutes and notice the winter sky. Say a simple prayer of gratitude as you sip your morning coffee. These moments of rest aren't luxuries, they're sacred space. They make room within us for the hope, peace, joy, and love that God is waiting to grow.

As we prepare for a new year, may this quieter rhythm help us discern what we want to carry forward and what we can lovingly set down. What practices nourish your spirit? Where is God nudging you toward newness? What burdens are asking to be released? The turning of the year is a holy threshold—an opportunity to reflect, reset, and remember that God is always doing a new thing in and through us.

Of course, this season is not easy for everyone. For many, the holidays bring reminders of grief, distance, change, or loneliness. Let us commit ourselves to being a community that sees and cares for one another. Reach out to someone who might be feeling isolated. Send a card, make a phone call, share a meal, or simply let someone know they matter. Small gestures can be lifelines. The love of Christ becomes real when it shows up in our hands and voices.

As we move through these winter days, may we hold quiet and compassion together. May we prepare our hearts for both the tender mystery of Christmas and the hopeful possibilities of a new year. And may we continue to be a congregation that extends warmth, welcome, and care to all.

With gratitude for each of you,

Pastor G



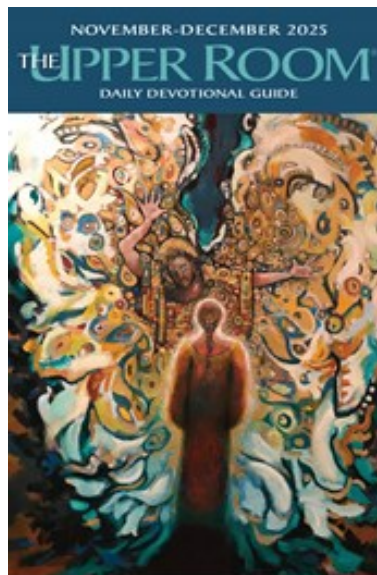
Birthdays

Eugene O'Bryan	December 4
Tim Foster	December 8
Joy Moore	December 8
Tucker Pleake	December 9
Dick Bulkeley	December 12
Thomas Hartwell	December 18
Rose Caffo	December 19
Sam Miller	December 19
Kay Caris	December 23
Tyler Pallante-Bulkeley	December 24
William Moore	December 26
Bob Hood	December 27
Jonathan Foster	December 31



John Easter & Merrily Abels	December 5
Bob & Jewell Hood	December 22
Paul & Suzy Zarkovich	December 24
Dick & Martha Bulkeley	December 28

We apologize if we have missed your special day. It means that the office does not have your information. Please notify the office if we need to update your information.



Have you been looking for a devotional? Did you know that *The Upper Room* is available in the narthex. Regular and large print versions are available.

A small donation is appreciated if you are able, but feel free to take one even if you can't donate.

The Men's Walk #269 will be January 29-February 1 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

The Women's Walk #270 will be February 12-15 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

Apply today. There are brochures and applications in the narthex.

Questions—Contact Pastor Gina or Mary Ann Crist.



Santa's Workshop

For many years CITD has sponsored a Santa's Workshop for the children residing at UMOM's Parsons Village. Parsons Village is a permanent, low-income apartment complex located in Sunnyslope. This year's Santa's Workshop is scheduled for **December 19th from 6:00-7:30PM.**

What is Santa's Workshop? It is an evening of fun that provides an opportunity for children residing at Parsons Village to "shop" for Christmas presents for their parents or other important adults in their life. In the past some children have told us that they have never been able to give a gift to their parent before.

How can you help? Volunteers and Donations are needed. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

Bring 1 or more UNWRAPPED ADULT gifts valued between \$20-\$25 to the church on Sunday, December 14th and place them under the tree.

Sign up at the Missions Table to donate other items such as gift tags, bows, etc.

Volunteer to attend Santa's Workshop and help the children shop; wrap their gifts; etc.

Don't miss this big event that brings Christmas cheer to children and adults alike! Please see Karen Bulkeley after service to sign up to help or email ksbulkeley@gmail.com.



Honoring Our Christmas Angels Fund-raiser

This year we will again be collecting donations in memory of the Saints (i.e. Angels) we have lost and don't want to forget this Christmas season as well as honoring our loved ones who are special to us. Each honoree will be remembered with an individual Christmas ornament that will be displayed in the Sanctuary starting with the Blue Christmas service on December 21st. After the Christmas Eve services you will be encouraged to take each ornament you sponsored home with you to add to your own tree, or give away, so your friends and family remain in your heart this Christmas and for many Christmases to come.

An individual ornament will be made for each \$10 donation. All proceeds will go toward meeting our apportionment commitment. You may honor as many people as you would like but we ask that there be just one name per ornament. **Donations and the name(s) of your honorees MUST be to the church office and/or provided to Karen Bulkeley no later than December 17th.**

FOOD WITH FRIENDS
CHRISTMAS POTLUCK
SATURDAY DECEMBER 20 5:00 PM
FELLOWSHIP HALL



Blessing of the Animals—November 8



Rev. Gina Pollard gives a blessing to all the good puppies who attended!



Moose had a great time doing the *Puppy Apple Bobbing* and entertaining the crowd.



Chyrell and her family sharing the book showing all the adoptable dogs that *Love Connection Dog Rescue* is fostering..



Jessica showing us how she creates such lifelike portraits



CITD Leadership Board

We did not have our regularly scheduled Leadership Board meeting in November due to a conflict. We will be having it on December 2nd instead. That should be it for the rest of 2025.

We did have an emergency joint Leadership Board and CITD Foundation Board meeting with the congregation also invited regarding the state of our sewer systems. The Preschool was closed for Friday, November 14th, but thanks to a lot of hard work over the weekend by Hobaica, they were able to get the Preschool opened the following Monday. However, out of this we were informed that our sewer systems were in a very dire condition. After discussion, there was consensus from all attending the meeting that we really needed to do the most complete repair. The cost of the work already completed for the Preschool was \$9,266.60 with the additional work requiring another \$75,998.78. The Leadership Board voted unanimously to do the complete solution but to ask the CITD Foundation Board for the money, and the CITD Foundation Board voted to do so.

There will be a Ministry Planning Session on January 10 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Pastor Gina has prepared a draft ministry plan for 2026 which is still being reviewed. Everyone on the Leadership Board as well as our various ministry leaders should attend. All others who are interested are invited to join us.

Our Apportionments are currently at \$9,796.05 or 20.83% paid, but with the additional money coming from the CITD Foundation for the sewer system, there should also be an additional \$9,000 paid taking us to 39.97% by the end of the year. We also have the Angel Tree Project which will add to that amount.

We are working on the budget for 2026. If you have not turned in your pledge, please do so as soon as possible. Remember this is really an estimate of giving. If your situation changes and you need to revise your pledge, you are certainly free to do so. Also, no amount is too small to pledge. Every little bit helps, and they do add up.

If you have questions, concerns, feedback (positive or negative) or want to get involved, please reach out to me or any member of the Leadership Board: Mary Nell Woodward, Romi Simons, Brooke Henry, Jonathan Foster, Rhonda Mortenson, Ada Thompson, Wanda Picciotti, and Kristin O'Shaughnessy.

In His service,

Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson
CITD Leadership Board
Cell: 602-363-4115
eobryan@cox.net



Repairs are under way on our aged sewer system. Approximately 400 feet of deteriorating concrete pipe is being cleaned and relined, necessitating a lot of digging



PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. Isaiah 7:14

Have you ever heard of Phillips Brooks? Perhaps you don't immediately recognize his name, but maybe you recognize some works he wrote. How about this: "No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in." Phillips Brooks wrote the much-loved hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem". The words of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" point to the very heart of Christmas. Jesus came into our broken world to rescue us from our sin and give all who would put their faith in Him a new and vital relationship with God.

In a letter to a friend decades after he wrote the hymn, Brooks described this relationship in his own life: "I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is no figure of speech. It is the realest thing in the world, and every day makes it realer. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on." Can you relate to how he felt? Our relationship with Christ is the "realest" and gets "realer" every day. He is here!! Now!!

Brooks' calm assurance of God's presence in his life reflects one of the names of Jesus prophesied by Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel". (Isaiah 7:14) The Gospel of Matthew gives us the meaning of the Hebrew name Immanuel: "God with us". (Matt 1:23) God drew near to us through Jesus so we could know Him personally and be with Him forever. His loving presence with us is the greatest gift of all.

PRAYER - Loving God, thank You for giving Yourself to us through Your life on earth, death on the cross and resurrection. Please help us to live for You today and forever. **AMEN**

WALK WORTHY

East District Prayer Focus for December

Wesley UMC—Phoenix
Rev. Towanda N.T. Connelly

White Mountain UMC—Show Low
Pastor Sailosisavu Koloto

PRAY
without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17



ADVENT NEWS

Breaking news...Phoenix Arizona

On the first Sunday of Advent, November 30th, 2025, congregants at Cross in the Desert UMC arrived for worship to find the sanctuary transformed for the Christmas season. Upon investigation it appears that a merry band of elves got into the church the previous day and were responsible for the metamorphosis! Hopefully the culprits can be identified and thanked!





Coming in January...

January 10th

9:00 am until 3:00 pm

2026 Ministry Planning Session

Plan to come and share your ideas for
2026 at CITD!



January 31 UWF Chili Fundraiser

More details to follow.....



Coming in February ...

February 12-15

Women's Walk to Emmaus #270

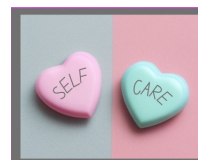
Avondale AZ

Pastor Gina is a Spiritual Director for this walk



February 28

Care for the Caregivers Conference





United
Women
in Faith

December Meetings of UWFaith

December 4	UWF Leadership Team	10:00 am	Library
December 6	UWF Installation of Officers and Brunch	10:00 am	
December 10	Mary Martha Christmas Meeting	1:00 pm	
	Pacific Seafood Buffet, 5905 W. Bell Rd, Glendale		
December 16	Devotions & Dinner - no meeting in December		
December 18	Bookworms United	10:00 am	Zoom
	Book — <i>The Time of the Child</i> by Niall Williams		

December Unit Meeting (United Women in Faith):

Fellowship Hall December 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m. with a brunch and a speaker

Speaker for Saturday's Unit meeting is Rachelle Jack, MPC, CSC.

She is a Counselor, Developmental Coach and Consultant.

Save the Date:

East District Training at Sun Lakes UMC – January 17, 2026



We believe love in action can change the world.



Desert Southwest Conference

The United Methodist Church

LSM: Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries at First UMC Gilbert – January 10 & 17, 2026

The East District is pleased to announce that “Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries” will be offered in person at First United Methodist Church of Gilbert, 331 S. Cooper Road, Gilbert, AZ 85233, on Saturday **January 10** AND Saturday, **January 17, 2026**, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This course is foundational for all courses in Lay Servant Ministries. Participants discover and employ personal spiritual gifts as God intended and consider the importance of exercising servant leadership, developing future leaders, remaining rooted in consistent spiritual practices and being part of a group that holds members accountable to their discipleship. The text “Lay Servant Ministries—Basic Course” by Sandra Zeigler Jackson and Brian Jackson is required reading for this program.

The cost for this course is **\$15.00** and is payable upon registration. Either register and pay online or call the District LSM Director at 317-730-0162 to complete the registration and send the payment to DSCUMC Treasurer, PO Box 32830, Phoenix, AZ 85064 with instruction to deposit into the East District LSM account.

Once you register for this course, you will receive a confirmation with a link to the book and other information.

If you have further questions, you may contact Susan Bowers, the East District LSM Director at email lay-servants@dscumc.org.



Conference Contacts

Bishop

Carlo A. Rapanut

Bishop's Assistant:

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Conference Lay Leader

Alberta Farnsworth

East District Superintendent

Melissa Rynders

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East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

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Christina Dillabough

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Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

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Building and Grounds Concerns
Please contact the office by phone or email so
the Property Team may be notified